**OBSERVATION AND FIELD NOTES**

Observational data refer to the raw materials an observer collects from observations, interviews, and materials, such as reports, that others have created. Data may be recorded in several ways: written notes, sketches, tape recordings, photographs, and videotapes. The purpose for observing a system being used is to obtain in a limited amount of time relevant data needed to change and/or improve the system.

**What to look for when doing observation?**

1. Physical setting.

2. Activities.

3. Human, social environment. The way in which human beings interact within the environment. This includes patterns of interactions, frequency of interactions, direction of communication patterns, decision-making patterns.

4. Formal interactions.

5. Informal interactions and unplanned activities.

6. Nonverbal communication.

7. Observing what does not happen.

**What are field notes?**

Field notes refer to transcribed notes or the written account derived from data collected during observations and interviews. There are many styles of field notes, but all field notes generally consist of two parts: descriptive in which the observer attempts to capture a word-picture of the setting, actions and conversations; and reflective in which the observer records thoughts, ideas, questions and concerns based on the observations and interviews.

Field notes should be written as soon as possible after the observation and/or interviews. The original data may be recorded in cryptic form, and unless they are fleshed out as soon as possible after the observation, important details may be forgotten and not appear in the field notes. Field notes are used to "broaden your range of vision" and produce data that will be of use in later stages of the system design.

**Characteristics of field notes**

1. Accurate.

2. Detailed, but not cluttered with irrelevant trivia.

3. Extensive to permit reader to understand the situation described. Use descriptive words to describe rather than interpretive words. E.g. "comfortable", "beautiful" are examples of interpretive words. "The building was welcoming" is interpretive.

Descriptive means supplying enough detail so the reader does not have to guess what the writer means or supply a great deal of additional information to interpret the description. "A room painted dark green with a whiteboard on one end" or dimensions of a room or purpose of a room are descriptive.

4. Data may provide an overview of a culture or setting. Include greatest detail on aspects of particular interest.

5. The observer should do more than simply record a setting. Observer's insights and thoughts about what has been observed are important. These comments should be included in a separate, reflective part of the field notes, not in the descriptive part of the filed notes.

**Guidelines for content part of field notes**

1. Describe the setting. This may include pencil drawings of the space and furniture arrangement.

2. Describe the activities that took place in that setting. Reproduce the sequence of actions and behaviors.

3. Describe the people who took part in the activities and their roles in the activities.

4. Describe the meaning of what was observed from the perspective of the participants.

5. Record exact quotes or close approximations of comments that relate directly to the observation activity.

6. Describe any impact you might have had on the situation you observed.

**Guidelines for reflective part of field notes**

1. Include sentences and paragraphs that are subjective. These include a more personal description of what you observed.

2. Emphasizes ideas, hunches, impressions, etc.

3. Includes unanswered questions that have arisen from reflecting on the observation data as well as ideas for future action.

4. Clarify points and correct mistakes and misunderstandings in other parts of field notes.

5. Include insights or speculation about what you are observing.

**Format of field notes**

Include a first page on which you include information on the observation, such as: name of observer, location of observation, date, and time. A short title can be helpful in identifying the purpose of the observation. Number individual sets of field notes if there will be follow-up observations at this site.

Large margins on the left side of each page leave space for notations and coding.

Field notes are easier to read if they are written using many small paragraphs, which reflect changes in activities, who is talking, etc.

There is no one format for field notes. Three possible formats are:

1. Save content part of field notes and reflective part of field notes in separate files.

2. Use two columns. The column on the right contains the content portion of field notes, with reflective comments relating to particular parts of the content part, written in the left column.

3. Use wide left margin. Body of file contains content part, with the observer's comments written in parentheses and indented under related paragraphs.

**UNIVERSIDAD DEL QUINDIO**

**MODERN LANGUAGE PROGRAMME - PEDAGOGIC PRACTICE**

**OBSERVATION TASKS**

Classroom observation is a way to learn from other teachers and to reflect about our own teaching practice. There are many possible topics to focus on classroom observation and plenty of formats to collect information for analysis. I have selected 8 observation tasks to do in the school and the classroom. In this way, you will get more familiar with observation schedules and the school and classroom environment. Read the next instructions carefully for your tasks completion.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. You need to do six observations during the next six weeks.
2. Each observation task has an observation schedule: School atmosphere, Attending the learner, Learner as doer, Instructions giving, managing error, eliciting, etc
3. Read carefully the purpose and procedures for each task.
4. After you complete the tasks you need to submit a report which includes:

* 6 completed observation formats with notes.
* A report of each observation task with analysis of the information gathered and your conclusions about each one of the topics.
* General conclusions: What did you learn from the experience personally and professionally. (Write about feelings, perceptions, and facts about the experience - Around 500 words)

I hope you enjoy the observations and learn from the experience.

Jonathan Vela

Updated on February 2015.

**References:**

**Suggested by:** Montoya, O. Universidad del Quindío. 2012

Wajnryb, R. (1992) *Classroom Observation Tasks.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

**SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT – Recess time:**

To observe behaviour and atmosphere during recess will give you an idea of the dynamics of the school, the teachers’ tasks, students’ behaviour and the relationships among them. This is an open observation in which you will consider any aspect for your conclusions.

PURPOSE: To detect school dynamics during recess and be aware of teachers’ tasks during this time. You may want to ask questions to teachers and/or students as you observe.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Teacher’s duties/behaviour | Students’ behaviour |
| *e.g. Teachers talk while watching students, etc.* |  |

COMMENTS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson Observation Task: Instructions & teacher language**

**Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Observer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Write here **notes** and **examples** of what the teacher/ students say! |
| Was the teacher’s **voice** clear and could he/she be heard by all the students? |  |
| Did the teacher make **eye contact** with the students? |  |
| Was the language used by the teacher **graded** to the students’ level, so they could understand? |  |
| Did the teacher speak at a **natural speed**, and use **contractions** when speaking? |  |
| Did the teacher give instructions **before** **giving out** **materials**? |  |
| Did the teacher **give a demonstration** of what students had to do? |  |
| Did the teacher **involve** **other** **students** in giving a demonstration before the activity |  |
| Did the teacher **use the board** to help to show students what to do? |  |
| Did the teacher **check** a part of the **instructions**/ ask a student what he/she had to do? |  |
| Did the teacher give all theinstructions at once, or in **stages as the students needed them**? |  |
| Did the **learners** know what to do and did they get involved in the activities? |  |
| Write here **two examples** of instructions the teacher gave. | Write here your ideas to **make them clearer** for students |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Lesson Observation Task: Sensitivity to learners**

**Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Observer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Comment** |
| **Teacher talking**  Think about:   1. Voice 2. Teacher language 3. Language grading 4. Teacher talking time |  |
| **Teacher’s manner**  Think about:   1. Instructions 2. appropriacy for adults/ not patronising 3. encouragement 4. courtesy 5. enthusiasm/ smiling |  |
| **Student involvement**   1. Were all the students participating? If not, why not? 2. Did the teacher show awareness of students as individuals? |  |
| **Materials, contexts and activities**  Did these reflect the students’ interests, age culture, personality etc.? |  |

**Lesson Observation Task: Real communication**

Look at the following teacher-student interaction:

Teacher: *What did you do at the weekend?*

Student: *I …play basketball*

Teacher: *Played… played basketball. Repeat please*.

Student: *Played basketball*.

Teacher: *Next. You! What did you do?*

Is the teacher interested in the student’s responses? Is this real communication?

How should the teacher have responded to the student’s ideas? (communication)

What kind of correction is appropriate? Compare the reformulation technique below

Teacher: *What did you do at the weekend?*

Student: *I …play basketball*

Teacher: *Oh you played basketball. Where did you play*?

Student: *We played at the school*.

Teacher: *Did you win the game?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Write here **notes** and **examples** of what the teacher/students say! |
| Write **examples of questions** the teacher asks students? |  |
| Did the teacher **show interest** in the student’s ideas? What did he/she say? |  |
| Were the students motivated to **give their ideas** in the class? |  |
| Did the teacher use **reformulation**? |  |
| Did she use **another technique** for correction (e.g. delayed correction, writing some errors on the board for students to correct together) |  |

**Lesson Observation Task: Presentation of new language**

**Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Observer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Think about** | **Comment** |
| Was there a **context** that was clear and interesting for the students? What was it? |  |
| Was **meaning** clear? How did the teacher clarify meaning? |  |
| How did the teacher **check** that students had understood? |  |
| Was **form** clear? Did students get a clear **record** of the new language? Were there sufficient **examples** related to the context? |  |
| Was **pronunciation** highlighted and practised? |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Was there an appropriate balance of **student-centred** and **teacher-centred** activities? |  |
| How long was the **teacher-centred** part of the presentation? |  |
| Did the teacher provide sufficient **controlled practice**? |  |
| Did the students get a chance to use the language in **meaningful communication**? |  |
| Any other comments? |  |

**Lesson Observation Task: Teaching Vocabulary**

**Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Observer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Think about** | **Comment** |
| What vocabulary arose **unplanned** in the lesson? Was this dealt with appropriately? |  |
| At what **stage** in the lesson was vocabulary focused on: as a main aim, as pre-teaching for receptive skills work, after receptive skills work? |  |
| Was the vocabulary **useful**, appropriate for these students’ needs, level and interests? |  |
| Was the **number of items** appropriate? |  |
| What **approach** to presentation was chosen? |  |
| Was **meaning checked** effectively?  Give examples of this. |  |
| Were **pronunciation** difficulties anticipated and dealt with appropriately? |  |
| Did the students get **a record** of the new vocabulary? |  |
| Were **word stress** and **difficult** **sounds** highlighted on the board when needed? |  |
| Did the board show how the words could **be used** in a phrase, when needed? |  |
| Did the students get a chance to use this vocabulary in **meaningful communication**? |  |
| Other comments. |  |

**Lesson Observation Task: Practice activities**

**Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Observer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Look at the various activities the teacher gave the students for practising language:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Think about** | **Comment** |
| **Activity 1:**  What was the **aim** of this activity (eg. controlled, semi-controlled, freer practice) What language exactly was it practising?  Did it give written or oral practice? |  |
| **Classroom management:**  Were the instructions clear? Did all the students understand what to do? Did they follow the instructions? Was the grouping of students appropriate (seating, who worked with who etc.?) |  |
| Was the activity meaningful, **communicative**, interesting? Was there any personalisation? Were the students sufficiently challenged? |  |
| Was the **pace** appropriate for weaker and stronger students? |  |
| **Activity 2:**  What was the **aim** of this activity? (eg. controlled, semi-controlled, freer practice) What language exactly was it practising?  Did it give written or oral practice? |  |
| **Classroom management:**  Were the instructions clear? Did all the students understand what to do? Did they follow the instructions? Was the grouping of students appropriate (seating, who worked with who etc?) |  |
| Was the activity meaningful, **communicative**, interesting? Was there any personalisation? Were the students sufficiently challenged? |  |
| Was the **pace** appropriate for weaker and stronger students? |  |
| **Activity 3** |  |
| **Overall**  Comment on the balance of controlled and less controlled practice. Was there sufficient/too much? Were students challenged? |  |
| Were students sufficiently prepared for the activities? Could the activities have been more *lifelike*?  Were activities from supplementary books well adapted? |  |

**Lesson Observation Task: Teaching listening or reading**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **FOCUS** | **OBSERVATION NOTES** |
| **Skills practise** |  |
| What was the skill that was practised and sub-skills?  How many skills were intregated in this lesson? |  |
| **Materials** |  |
| Were the materials related to the topic of this lesson?  Are the materials promoting the use of authentic language?  Is language used in context? |  |
| **Before Reading / Listening** |  |
| How did the teacher create interest in the material?  Was the pre-taught vocabulary useful and appropriate for the students’ needs?  How did the teacher present the vocabulary?  Was it in a student-centred or teacher-centred way? |  |
| **Comprehension tasks – While Reading / Listening** |  |
| How appropriate was the student’s book reading task?  Did the students have an opportunity to compare the answers in pairs or in groups?  How did the teacher help comprehension of the difficult parts of the text? |  |
| **After reading / Listening**  Did the students have an opportunity to react to the text personally?  Was the follow up activity appropriate for the task given?  Did it promote the development of productive skills? |  |
| **Learning strategies for Reading / Listening** |  |
| Were these reflected in the lesson? When? |  |
| **Activities and interaction patterns** |  |
| Were there different exercises?  Were there different interactional patterns? |  |
| **Pace** |  |
| Was the pace appropriate for the lesson and for the students’ needs? |  |

**Observation task: Classroom layout and pupil participation**

**Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Observer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

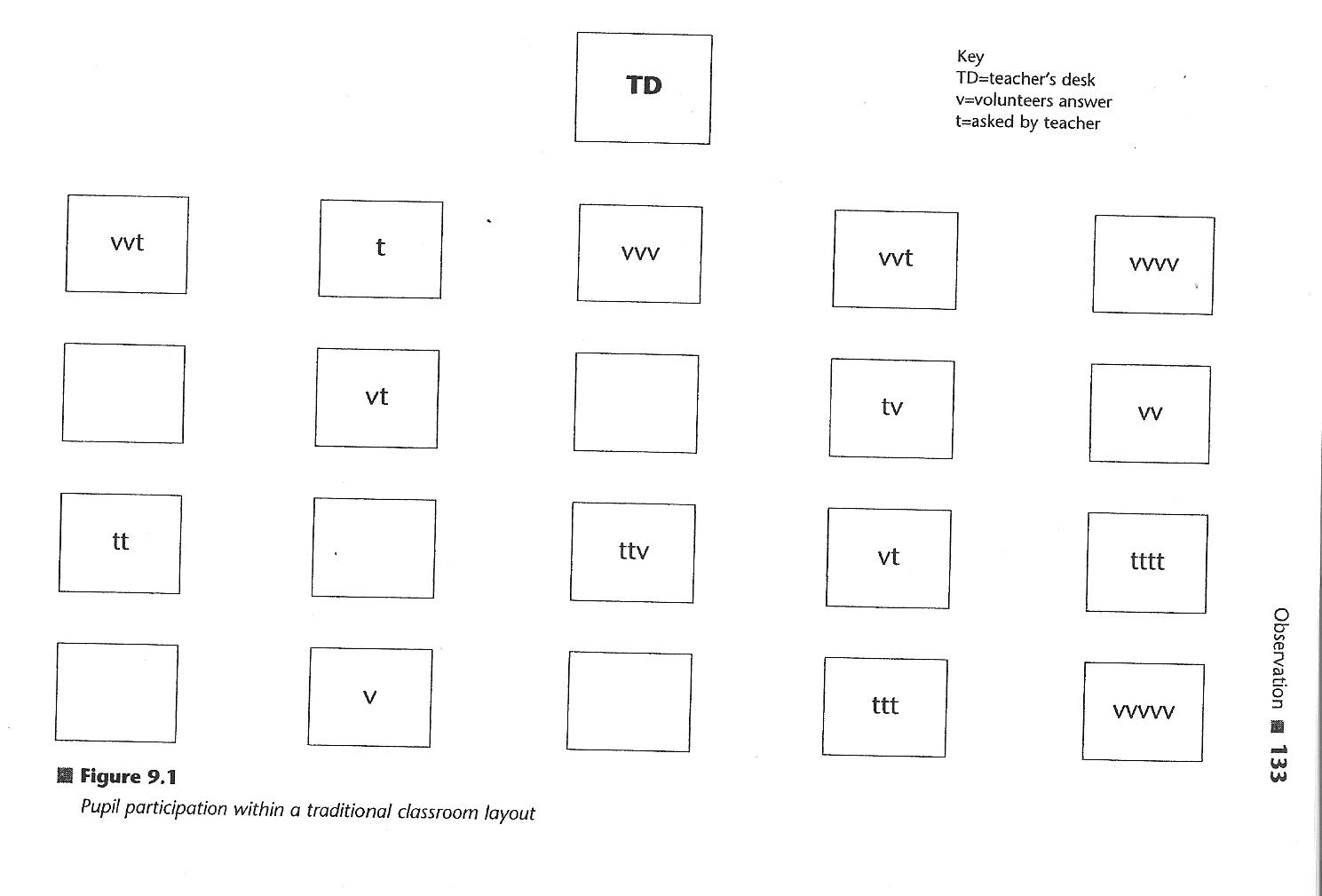
**The classroom layout in Figure 9.1 will be familiar to any teacher, pupil and parent. Plans such as these form the basis of initial observation and analysis.**

1. **Draw the classroom layout you are going to observe.**
2. **Record everytime a student participate according to the Key given next page.**

**According to your observation think of:**

**If it is the case, how does gender influence participation?**

**How is the teacher interaction with students?**

****

**Lesson Observation Task: Writing skill lessons**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Think about** | **Comment** |
| Was this work on writing **useful** and **relevant** to the students in terms of their needs and interests?  Comment on the materials used. |  |
| Were the students given some development of **writing subskills**;  *organisation of ideas, formal or informal style,, layout, linking words and cohesive devices, grammar for writing, punctuation, spelling*  Comment on how this was done: e.g. using a text(s). |  |
| Were there activities to help students think of **ideas** for the writing? Comment on how this was done: groupwork, speaking, etc. |  |
| Were the students encouraged to think of the **communicative aim** of the writing: e.g. to be aware of **the** **reader**? |  |
| Were individual students **challenged** by the writing activities? Was there enough time for students to produce good work? |  |
| Was **correction** handled appropriately? |  |
| How was **feedback** handled? Were students given an opportunity to assess the work in terms of the value as a piece(s) of writing? |  |
| Any other comments? |  |

**Lesson Observation: Speaking or Writing**

Sequence of the lesson:

* What stages did the lesson have?
* Was there a clear transition between one activity and the other?

Scaffolding:

* When was scaffolding provided to students?
* Was language and content support provided throughout the lesson?
* Did you feel prepared to write the news story in the lesson?
* What was the benefit of having a pre and post writing activity?

Interaction:

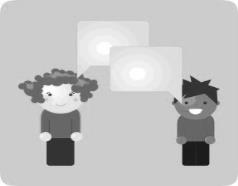
* Was there a variety of interaction patterns? ( individual, pair work, group work)
* Was there interaction between skills? (Can a writing/ speaking lesson allow the development of other skills and vice versa)

Role of the teacher:

Which of these roles did you observe in these teachers: organiser, facilitator, material adapter, supporter, controller, resource? Why?

Pacing:

* Can you recall how many activities did this lesson have?
* How long did each activity take?



**Lesson Observation Task: Peer Observation Task: Checking learners’ understanding**

**Observer ……………………………………..**

**Date of observation ……………………….. Level of class …………………………….**

**Teacher ……………………………………… Teacher’s signature ……………………..**

# Introduction:

# Teaching is a very complex activity. One reason for this is that not all students learn at the same rate. Students do not learn what they are taught at the same time as it is taught. They do not understand things equally well or equally quickly. It is also very difficult to predict or generalise across a whole class what learning will take place. For this reason teachers develop strategies for checking that learning is taking place or has taken place. In this task you are asked to pay attention to the way a teacher monitors learning.

# Before the lesson:

Make sure you are familiar with the grid below.

# During the lesson:

Use the grid to collect data on at least five instances of a teacher checking learning.

Try to be aware of times in the lesson when the teacher chooses not to check learning and consider why this might have been so.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| How does teacher check?  (try to script teacher’s language) | What does teacher check? | Why does teacher check?  (can you identify the trigger that caused teacher to check, eg a student looks confused/an error repeated) | How does student respond? | What follow-up is there?  **(is there any follow-up)** | What did the learning check achieve? |
| “Is she still fat?” | concept of ‘used to’ | Establish concept of new language | “No, she isn’t.” | T. confirms (“That’s right”) Checks another Student | Establishes and confirms meaning and leads on to next stage of lesson |
| How does teacher check?  (try to script teacher’s language) | What does teacher check? | Why does teacher check?  (can you identify the trigger that caused teacher to check, eg a student looks confused/an error repeated) | How does student respond? | What follow-up is there?  **(is there any follow-up)** | What did the learning check achieve? |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

Adapted from: Wajnryb, R (1992) Classroom ***Observation Tasks*** CUP